Huddersfield Local History Society

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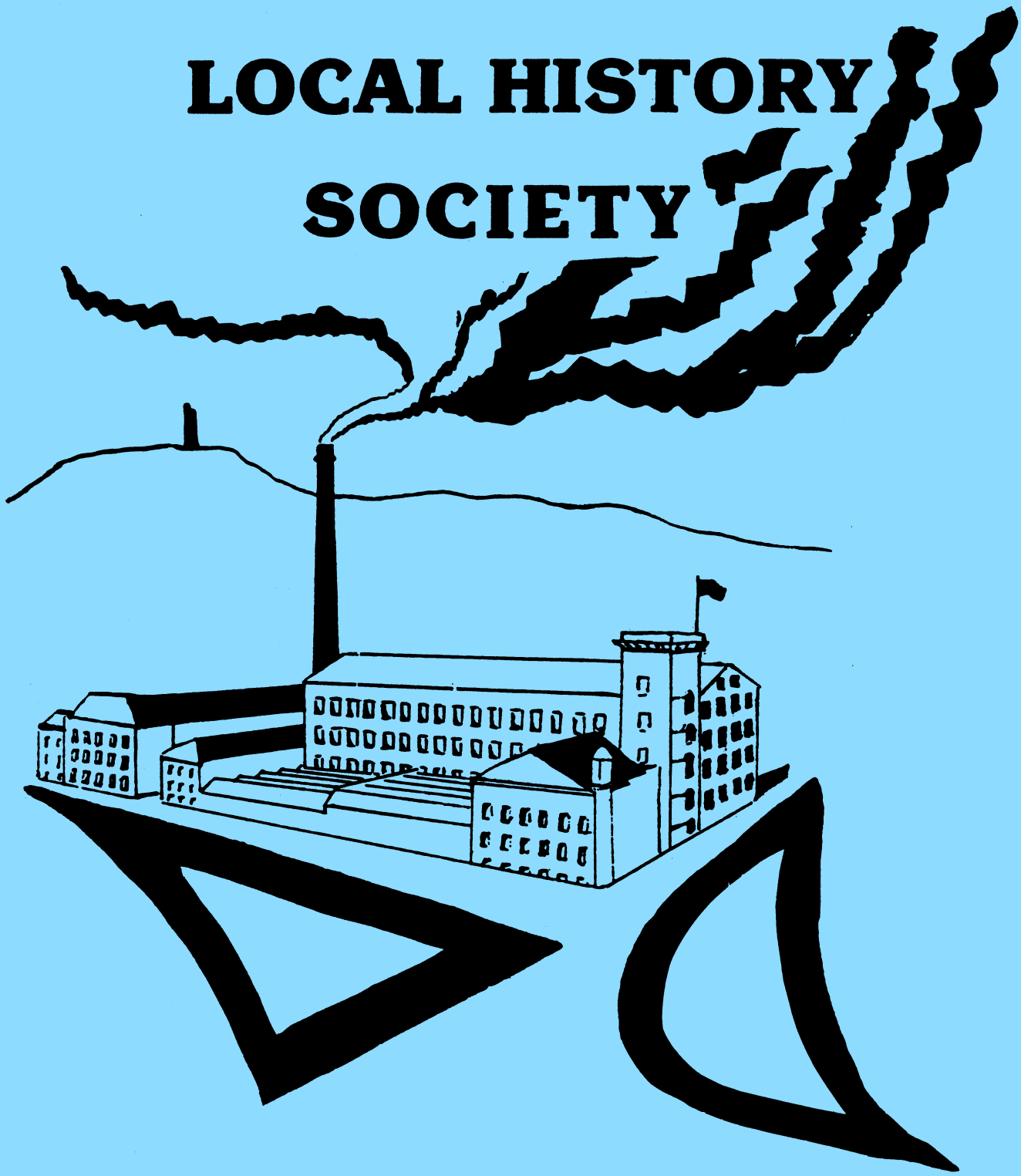
LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY



JOURNAL

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The Local Historian as Activist

Some belated thoughts on the life and times of D.F.E. Sykes

Cyril Pearce

British culture has a curiously ambivalent attitude to intellectuals and scholars. We seem to prefer them to stay in their academic cloisters while, at the same time, condemning them for being unworldly - as if we hadn't wished that on them in the first place. Then, if they come out and engage with the world - as if to confound the stereotype - they make us uncomfortable and we wish them back in the academy again. And yet the scholars keep trying, often at great cost to themselves and their reputations. This seems to have been particularly true of Historians and especially of those with a radical, not to say revolutionary, turn of mind. Given my own leanings, the names that spring first to mind in this connection are from that rich vein of post-war Marxist scholarship - Raphael Samuel, Erie Hobsbawm, Christopher Hill, Brian Simon and Edward Thompson, while not forgetting their equally active pre-war counterparts in G.D.H.Cole, Raymond Postgate, and R. H. Tawney. Feminist scholarship in the closing decades of the twentieth century has given us Sheila Rowbotham, J111 Liddington and many more. That is not to say that Historians of the political centre and "right" have not been equally engaged - I am thinking of A. J. P. Taylor, Hugh Trevor Roper, Maurice Cowle and even David Irving. The lists, from whatever persuasion, could be much longer and the stories of academic endeavour set aside or affected in some other way, by engagement with real-world matters, multiplied in spite of cultural predispositions.

So much we probably know. What is less well known is the extent to which this has occurred in the rather less dramatic world of local history. I was struck by these thoughts recently when preparing work with colleagues on the subject of Huddersfield's nineteenth and early twentieth century local historians. The figure of Canon Hulbert looms pretty large here. His scholarly concerns to give an account of the history of the parish of Almondbury or the Church in Slaithwaite did not prevent him from being thoroughly engaged with his church and its role or with the prevailing politics of popular education. Of course, we shouldn't really be surprised at this. After all, the vast majority of local historians are, and always have been, amateurs who have to pursue their studies in their own time. In a sense, they have no option but to be engaged with the world. But the world of work is not quite what I mean. That isn't what the major scholars were about. In fact, for them, an engagement with the world outside the academy was about getting away from their working world. No, what I am chiefly concerned about is with the world of what we call "public life". In simple terms we might call it "politics" but that has too narrow a set of connotations in the way we currently use it. "Public life", although a slightly old-fashioned term, is an evocation of an altogether broader range of concerns.

If we look again at Huddersfield's local historians, notwithstanding Canon Hulbert, the scholar who immediately comes to mind, above all others, is D. F. E. Sykes. He is an almost classic model of the politically and socially committed intellectual. His involvement in the life of the real world almost destroyed him.

I probably speak for many local historians of my generation - and others - when I say that D.F.E. Sykes' work was probably my own first introduction to a thoroughly scholarly account of the history of Huddersfield. His *History of Huddersfield and its Vicinity* first published in 1898 or his *History of the Colne Valley* published in1906 remain the authoritative touchstones for subsequent historians. Later one came across the much less well know Sylces the novelist - *Ben o' Bill's the Luddite (1898); Dorothy's Choice (1904); Miriam (1912); Sister Gertrude (1908); Tom Pinder, foundling (1906)* - and even later, Sylces the temperance pamphleteer and campaigner. But it was the story of Sykes the committed local activist which caught the eye and roused the curiosity. He needs a biographer. If this piece can stir someone to take on the job then it will have served its purpose.

His writings and researches apart, our knowledge of Sykes' life is a matter of tantalising fragments. But they are fragments which are far from dead or dry. D.F.E. himself has seen to that. In two accounts of his life given on separate occasions and to very different audiences he has created confusion and carefully laid down smokescreens to obscure important details. There is, at times, a sense that, in being compelled to re-invent himself in his later life he had to re-adjust the story of his earlier years to match. This only adds to the fascination and to the half-understood feeling that D.F.E. was something special. There is a strong sense of the tragic about him. There is also more than a hint of "... if only if only he hadn't done that or said this, perhaps he could have done more, been more, made a bigger splash in his home town and, who knows, beyond it. In the issue which followed Sykes' death, the editor of the Colne Valley Guardian chose to lead his editorial column-in Mr. D.F.E. SYKES, and to comment, "The Colne Valley has lost one of its best known personalities in 'Deffie' Sykes. Of no man could it more truthfully be said, 'Of all sad words of tongue or pen The saddest are these. 'It might have been".'

Some of the essentials of his life are not hard to find. Daniel Frederick Edward Sykes was born in Huddersfield in 1856. His father, Edwin Sykes, originally from Linthwaite, was a successful solicitor. According to D.F.E. his father's family originally came from Upper Holme in Slaithwaite. The 1871 census records Edwin Sykes and his family living in Fitzwilliam Street: Edwin, 43, his wife, Eliza, 40, his mother-in-law Hannah Hudson, 75, and their four children, D. F. E. aged 15, Charlotte, 10, Matilda, 8 and Emma 7.

It is generally agreed that D. F. E. was a very bright child and, later a brilliant scholar and student. He attended Huddersfield College where he won both silver and gold medals. Later he went on to London University where he was awarded an LL.B. In 1877, after graduating he returned to Huddersfield to join his father's practice which was re-named "Edwin Sykes and Son" in his honour. Shortly after this Edwin died suddenly, leaving D.F.E. to run the practice alone. For a man of his talents, even at the tender age of twenty-one, this seemed to present no problems. Indeed, he seemed set on course for a glittering legal career.

Along with his undoubted scholarship and burgeoning legal practice, D.F.E. had a strong and principled commitment to politics and to public life. He was in great demand as a lecturer on topical and political themes. His political views placed him on the "left" of the Liberal Party where he was often described as an "Extreme Radical". He was a member of the Huddersfield Liberal 600, the Party's governing body in the town, and, from 1880 to 1883, represented the Almondbury Ward on Huddersfield Town Council.

The late 1870's and 1880's were turbulent times for Liberalism, locally and nationally. The party was heading for the division over the Irish Question, which culminated in 1886 in Gladstone's conversion to Home Rule. It was further divided by internal debates on social reform, which set the more conservative members against the radicals. D.F. E. was with the radicals. For the Liberal Party at this time there are numerous parallels with the savage internal divisions in the Labour Party in the 1980's which preceded the break-away formation of the Social Democratic Party. One of the key issues in this particular debate within Liberalism was how the party should respond to the aspirations of the industrial working class. The Party's principled commitment to widening the franchise and to freedom and opportunities for all made it the "natural" home of working class radicals. However, its equivocation on trade union matters and its persistent reluctance to select working class candidates for local or parliamentary elections contributed ultimately, in 1893, to the formation of the Independent Labour Party. More pointedly, Liberal employers' resistance to trade unions at local level undermined the party's claim to working class sympathy.

D.F.E. seems to have been deeply involved in the debate which was stirred by these divisions. His relationship with fellow Liberals on the Town Council was, apparently, not always easy. According to John Sugden, then also a Liberal councillor, there was no mistaking which side D.F.E was on. "He was a splendid speaker, had a facile pen, and was a great Radical, full of zeal on behalf of the working classes, wisely or unwisely exerted it is not for me to say, only to add that it was well meant". On the Council " ... he had many well-known battles on behalf of the people against the forces of retrogression... and fluttered the dovecotes of the old Corporation".

It was this charismatic and brilliant young radical who attracted Phyllis Bentley's attention when writing her novel *Inheritance*. A character easily recognised as D.F.E. but re-named Barnforth figures significantly in her story and, like D.F.E. himself, played a central role in the Weavers' Strike of 1883. For John Barnforth as for D.F.E. Sykes, the 1883 strike was a turning point in his life.

In late 1881, D.F.E had sunk his own money and a thousand pounds borrowed from his father-in-law into a publishing venture called the Huddersfield and Colne Valley Radical. A weekly newspaper later re-named The Northern Pioneer, it became a vehicle for D.F.E.'s own brand of radical Liberalism. This act alone was probably guaranteed to alienate the support of Huddersfield's well to do on whom D.F.E. relied for his work as a solicitor. However, it was his role in the 1883 Weavers' Strike which confirmed it.

The 1883 Strike - some would argue it was a lockout - divided the community bitterly and quite dramatically. This is not the place to explore its detail but it is clear that the dispute represented the attempt by the fledgling Weavers' Union to assert its presence in the local textile industry and the masters' concerted effort to resist it.
During the strike's eleven weeks, D.F.E.'s editorials constantly urged negotiations and condemned any signs of intransigence on either side. In his use of language and the power and clarity of his arguments, he was very obviously not out to make friends. Indeed, much of what he said and the way in which he said it was probably guaranteed to have the opposite effect. He was arguing for a standard of conduct, of rational debate and practical negotiation which was simply not recognised by either side. There was more than a little arrogance about the way the twenty-seven year old Sykes behaved and it certainly does not seem to have endeared him to either masters or men. He even tried to

intervene personally by addressing a workers' meeting at Castle Hill. The people there were not inclined to be lectured as to their conduct by this young lawyer and barracked him. Their union leaders had to plead with them to let him speak which eventually they did. But it was a studiously polite and noncommittal hearing he was eventually given and the intervention had no effect. If he could not persuade the weavers of the wisdom of his advice, he made no impression on the employers. He was publicly accused of taking the weavers' side, but he dismissed the suggestion with an editorial sweep of the pen. "We have been accused in this contest of taking sides. We treat that accusation with contempt. We shall not even condescend to rebut it." A week later, with high indignation he was rounding on the masters, while not sparing the Weavers' Union: "The masters do not mean to arbitrate. They mean to smash up the Weavers' Union.

They have embarked on a certain enterprise. Goaded beyond endurance by the interference of the Weavers' Union, they formed one of their own which set before it one definite object, and that was, apparently, to shatter, nay to pulverise the Weavers' Union".

In his own account of the strike written for the *Colne Valley Guardian in 1900*, D.F.E. shows no sign of self- criticism and certainly makes no attempt to reappraise his role - rather the opposite. He claims to have attempted to play the honest go-between but to have been betrayed by the intransigence of both sides. Within the same apologetics, however, he does unconsciously condemn himself. The story he tells is that while on holiday in Southport during the strike he happened to meet two prominent local textile manufacturers. They fell into conversation about the dispute and suggested that if they were able to talk directly to the union leader, Albert Shaw, they could have the matter resolved very quickly. Eager to help, Sykes offered himself as intermediary. He telegraphed Albert Shaw and invited him to join them in Southport. Shaw obliged and, according to D.F.E., over a good meal the major issues in the dispute were agreed and resolved. Unfortunately, back in Huddersfield, at the same time, the Mayor was trying to bring both sides together. He had the employers representatives lined up but no one could find Albert Shaw. Once it became known that D.F.E. had summoned him to Southport all the good work accomplished over dinner was destroyed and D.F.E.'s reputation for meddling was confirmed. He writes about this episode without any sense that in such a delicate matter he might, perhaps have contacted other key players to tell them what was going on. His own sense of the importance of his interventions is undimmed even after almost twenty years.

The *Pioneer* had been losing money from the day it was first published. D.F.E.'s editorial line during the strike did not help. Unfortunately, by the summer of 1883, the legal practice was also in difficulties. D.F.E. lays the blame at the door of the textile masters and those who depended on them.
"Then a boycott began. The shopkeepers withdrew their advertisements from the Pioneer, and many manufacturing clients, and those who lived on them, fetched away their deeds and papers from my office. I had a little queue of men, day after day, asking for their bills to be made out and shaking me coldly by the hand and saying goodbye." Shortly after the strike ended the paper was closed down and its presses sold. D.F.E. struggled to revive his legal practice but, apparently, without success. In May 1884 he left the district and, shortly after that, became the subject of a petition in bankruptcy.

This is where the most difficult and only partially understood chapter in his life began. In his account of D.F.E.'s life John Sugden says of this period: "For years the poor fellow wandered about the country, suffered terrible hardships and great privations". Parts of that story can be pieced together from a number of sources but the sum of these fragments still leaves a host of unanswered questions.

D.F.E.'s own account is contradictory. At his hearing in bankruptcy in 1899 he maintained that he left Huddersfield to go to Cornwall. Ostensibly this was to help a fellow radical Liberal in his campaign for a Cornish Parliamentary seat. We don't know the name of the candidate nor the seat he was to contest. He makes no mention of this in his "Reminiscences" published in the *Colne Valley Guardian* a little over a year later. In that account his destination after leaving Huddersfield was Ireland where, he alleges, he stayed with numerous people but was fully involved in the Irish politics of the time. He makes no mention of his bankruptcy and yet, according to the 1899 bankruptcy hearing, it was while he was in Cornwall that he was informed of the petition in bankruptcy. He did not return to Huddersfield to challenge the petition and was declared bankrupt. Apparently his debts totalled £9,870 14s. 6d. while his assets were estimated at only £558 12s. 1 Id. There was even a suggestion that he had misappropriated money held from the sale of a client's property. He consistently failed to respond to demands from the courts that he return to answer the petition. In 1886 a warrant was issued for his arrest but, fortunately for him, was never executed.

We know little of the detail of his journeys in the years after 1884. As an undischarged bankrupt he could not work as a solicitor. In 1890 he applied to the Law Society for a renewal of his certificate to practice but was refused. An undischarged bankrupt was not considered a fit and proper person to run a legal practice. D.F.E. maintained that he could not afford to petition the court to clear his name. Instead of working as a lawyer he had to find employment where he could. He turned to his skills as a writer and, occasionally, worked as a schoolteacher.

In the account he gave at his bankruptcy hearing D.F.E. went from Cornwall, to Ireland. He maintained that, "During the first two months he was in Ireland he maintained himself by writing for the Press, and the rest of the fifteen months he was there he was ill, and maintained by his brother in law. When he went to Ireland he had only enough to pay his fare from Bristol to Waterford where he had to pawn his watch and borrow money from a friend." In his altogether more relaxed and discursive account of his stay in Ireland set out in his "Reminiscences", he says nothing about the hardships but does relate the nature of his illness:

"Of the North of Ireland I saw only enough to make me intensely dislike it. At Belfast I got typhoid fever; then rheumatic fever and when I could crawl I was ordered to the cold, rare climate of Canada."

While In Canada he claims to have made a living as a journalist. He also claims to have met prominent citizens and politicians and, when down on his luck, to have thrown himself on the mercy of fellow Freemasons. He says nothing at all about how long he was in Canada or, indeed where he left his wife and family all this time. But then, in these "Reminiscences" he does not really tell his life story so much as use aspect of it as a threads around which he can weave anecdotes and travellers tales.

At some point between 1883 and 1893 - or it could have been earlier - D.F.E. appears to have become addicted to drink. Perhaps he was an alcoholic. It is impossible to say, but the evidence that drink had begun to affect him is very clear. Where and when his addiction began we do not know but by 1893 it had reached a critical point and had brought him to the verge of even greater ruin. The Huddersfield Chronicle for the 4 th November reported,

MR. D. F. E. SYKES SENT TO PRISON SHOCKING STORY OF NEGLECT OF CHILDREN

Beneath the headline was a sad account of D.F.E's decline. He was living in Grantham and had been a master at the Grammar School. His wife was working as a governess and he had charge of their two boys. His income, combined with that of his eldest son, was 22s. per week. The National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children had brought the case against him and one of their inspectors gave evidence.

"Sykes had suffered from delirium tremens, and the inspector of the Society found on visiting the house that the children were insufficiently clothed and had no food except one piece of putrid mutton, the defendant being in bed suffering from the effects of drink. On subsequently visiting the house all the goods had gone. The eldest son told a pitiful tale as to how his father took his four shillings and buying 2d. worth of milk drank most of it himself mixed with whisky and brandy and when asked for some money to buy food he told them to do without. He and his brother had no food to eat for three days and during that time his father always came home unsteady." D.F.E. was sentenced to two months imprisonment with hard labour.

We don't know what happened next. Who took care of the boys, where D.F.E. was imprisoned or when he was released and where he went next are all tantalising questions for which, as yet, we have no answers. Nothing of this is mentioned in the "Reminiscences". D.F.E. is amusingly "frank" about having spent time in doss houses up and down the country. Indeed, he uses this as the basis for anecdotal accounts of the people he met and the bugs, lice and other small crawling or jumping creatures with which he became infested. He describes a kind of picturesque life on the tramp of the kind popularised by his more famous contemporary Jack London. It even became something of a genre at the hands of W.H. Davies in (1929) Autobiography of a super-tramp and George Orwell's *Road to Wigan Pier and Down and Out in London and Paris*. Unlike these better known exponents of the genre, within his vivid descriptions there is an almost pathetic attempt by D.F.E. to suggest that not all those he met on the road were the dregs of society and, therefore, by association, neither was he:

" ... these memories of mine carry me back mainly to folk I have met in the Common Lodging Houses of England: a Town Clerk, A Vicar, the expectant heir to a great title, a man who enjoys at least £20,000 a year, a butcher, a baker, a candlestick maker, all sorts and conditions of men.
I can fancy the reader shrugging his respectable shoulders and exclaiming 'Hugh!' at this picture of the submerged tenth. But be gentle your reproaches; look leniently on these Ishmaels of society. They are not all sodden in sin or steeped in iniquity. They are not all there from choice. Degraded as they are, vicious and besotted, destitute and despairing as they appear, they have not always been there. The memory of happier and purer days is still fresh to many of them, but alas! In the stem fight between the forces of good and the forces of evil they fell victims to the latter. And what a fall!"

Having let this last "And what a fall!" ring true of his own experience, D.F.E. concludes on a higher almost celebratory note:

" ... nothing is farther from the truth than to suppose that the life and the environment of the doss house is altogether devoid of interest or attraction to fallen and unfortunate humanity. There is a free, fraternal, aye, and even honourable Bohemianism about it which the untempted embodiment of domestic respectability knows nothing."

After the Grantham court appearance in November 1893, there is a gap of about four years before D.F.E. re-appears. Perhaps after leaving prison, this was the time he spent on the road. His own accounts are extremely vague on dates. It does appear that around about 1897 he returned to Huddersfield. Having said that, there is some doubt about how, why or even when he returned. In his "Reminiscences" he writes simply of tramping back to Huddersfield on a whim:

"It was a morning in the early May. I had spent the night in a doss and when the day dawned, occupied the wretched moments counting the bugs drop from the ceiling, 'I'll go back to Huddersfield, I cried to myself. But how? Well, there was only shank's mare for it."

The doss was, apparently, in the London area because his first stop on the way north was at Barnet where he threw himself on the generosity of a local schoolteacher "with whom I had some acquaintance".

The story told at his bankruptcy hearing in 1899 was rather different. It suggests that he was not in London at all but Cardiff and that it was the Cardiff Poor Law Guardians who had sent him home. As his home town, Huddersfield would have been the proper place for him to receive the indoor poor relief he needed. On the other hand, D.F.E. insisted that he was actually in Cardiff workhouse hospital and that it was he who had asked to be sent to Huddersfield. In

terms of this tale, it is a subtle difference but a significant one for his self-esteem. But, the story is totally different from that set out in his "Reminiscences". The one is the romantic story of the 'knight of the road" returning home after his wanderings, the other, a much grimmer story of the return of a derelict. It is understandable which story he preferred and which one he chose to tell to entertain the readers of the Colne Valley Guardian. In one he is a free, even "Bohemian" spirit, in the other a pathetic wreck.

The "Reminiscences" end with his return to Huddersfield. The rest of the story has to be pieced together from other sources. Supported by a number of old friends, John Sugden among them, he began the difficult process of rebuilding his life. In 1899 he finally returned to the Bankruptcy Court in an attempt to secure his discharge. He was desperate to apply once more for his certificate to practice as a solicitor. His discharge was not granted and, as far as we know, he never practised law again.

Instead of the law he turned increasingly to his writing. In1898, the year before his appearance in the Bankruptcy Court, he had published his *History of Huddersfield and its Vicinity.* It was dedicated to Thomas Brooke of Armitage Bridge House and funded by subscription. In the following year, 1899, with George Henry Walker, he published Ben o' *Bill's.* He became a regular contributor to the Colne Valley Guardian with his FRAGMENTS OF LOCAL HISTORY. Persistent anecdotal evidence suggests that this set the patterns for the rest of his life. He spent his time balancing research and writing against going door-to-door to secure subscriptions or to sell his books. In spite of the hardships of this hand-tomouth existence, perhaps with the help of family and friends, he was finally able to settle down. At first, it seems, he lived in Huddersfield but then, by stages and over time, he made his way to Slaithwalte and then to Marsden. At what point he was re-united with his family is not clear, but by the time of his death in 1920, he and his wife were living together in quiet respectability

The evidence is too vague to say conclusively that D.F.E. was alcoholic or that. After coming home, that he was thoroughly reformed. We do know he became involved with the local temperance movement because he turned his hand to producing temperance tracts and to public speaking for the temperance cause. His 1897 pamphlet, *Drink*, by one of the rescued was unequivocally autobiographical. The date of this pamphlet's publication, coinciding as it does with the year of his return to Huddersfield, suggests that D.F.E. was already on the way to recovery. In rapid succession that same year he also produced *More about drink* and an explanation of Temperance movement policy in *What is the Local Option?*

There is little doubt that when he returned D.F.E. was keen to portray himself as a chastened man. He was at great pains to re-establish himself in the local community if only the better to cam a living to support his wife and family. His connection with the temperance movement was a major part of that process. On the evidence of his writing for the Colne Valley Guardian, he was also at pains to establish himself as something of a romantic victim - flawed but, perhaps, more sinned against than sinning.

Where that left his former political radicalism is not clear. We do know that after his return he played no active part in local politics until the very end of his life. In 1918 he publicly supported F. W. Mallalleu the Liberal Coalition candidate without the coupon" for the Colne Valley constituency in that year's General Election. This connection may have been as much about self interest as it was about politics since he also published The Huguenot ancestry of the Mallalieus of Saddleworth in 1920, shortly before he died.

At first sight, after his return in 1897, D.F.E. does seem to have set aside his former radicalism. The tone of his histories and their obsequious dedications to the great and the good of the local community suggest a change of heart. His account of the 1883 Weavers' Strike in the History of Huddersfield is a model of dispassionate writing. There is no mention here of the masters' intransigence which he had criticised so strongly at the time. Yet, in other places, the old spark shines through. Ben o' Bill's is not the antiluddite novel it might have been had D.F.E. wanted to go all the way in currying favour with the local elite. In fact it is Just the opposite, and his other work, such as Tom Pinder, foundling, still contain strong messages of the need for social justice through reform. Similarly, his "Reminiscences" make no bones about the issue of the 1883 strike nor does he feel the need to apologise for his role in it. In 1915 we even find him talking to the Lockwood Socialist Institute about militarism. This is not to suggest that he had taken his radicalism to the point of converting to socialism but simply to say that, notwithstanding the strategies he had to adopt to re-establish himself after 1897, he did not entirely abandon his old critical turn of mind.

Of all the gaps and speculations which, of necessity bedevil any attempt to get a real grasp of D.F.E. Sykes' difficult life, there is one which puzzles me most. Indeed, it must puzzle anyone who has worked at the business of research and writing in local history. How, if as he claimed, he only arrived back in Huddersfield in 1897, could he possibly have written and published and gathered in subscriptions for his History of Huddersfield and its Vicinity by 1898? At the same time he was writing the first of his temperance pamphlets and the following year published the first edition of Ben o' Bill's. His was, without doubt, a prodigious intellect and, freed of the drink, perhaps capable of significant feats of energetic scholarship, but there is another view. Phyllis Bentley's John Barnforth was a lifelong local history researcher who came to writing and lecturing after the trauma of his own business collapse in the aftermath of 1883 strike. While the parallels between Bainforth and D.F.E are not exact in every case, perhaps there is some sense in this one. The work on which he drew for his *History of Huddersfield* - while allowing for his debt to other writers, Hobkirk, Phillips, Hulbert and Frank Peel among them - can only have been begun before he left the town and probably continued while he was on his travels. But even this speculation raises a question. It was Sykes himself who claimed that he had only returned to Huddersfield in 1897. It was a claim he made in the Bankruptcy Court at his hearing in March 1899. In the interim he maintained he had set matters in motion to meet his creditors and to secure an agreement to a settlement. There was

such a meeting in the summer of 1898. But this was a court of law and, as a lawyer, he was determined to make the best case for his client - himself. In the process he may have been a little economical with the truth. Had he actually admitted to having returned to Huddersfield before 1897 it might have attracted the accusation that he had been slow to make the effort to meet his obligations and come to terms with his creditors. An earlier return home would have allowed him a little more time to pick up the pieces of his local history researches in time to burst into print in 1897 and 1898. A less superhuman timetable and one which is altogether more credible. However, whatever the truth of the matter, it has to be assumed that D.F.E.'s work - both original and derivative - reflected a lifelong passion which has us all in his debt.

Where does that leave us with the title of this piece, The Local Historian as Activist, and how can we connect the life of D.F.E. Sykes with the lives and work of all those other more celebrated politically and socially engaged historians of the past and of our own time? On this reading I hope the case is clear. Whatever his personal weaknesses or strengths there is little doubt that D.F.E. Sykes was the very model of the engaged intellectual. His journalism, his pamphleteering and his historical writings are all of a piece with his engagement with public life and the great issues of the day. The most authoritative parts of his writing are those which deal with the 19th century. His intellectual journey was to understand his own time and in making that journey he could not help but take sides. Taking sides about the recent past meant taking sides in the present. Therefore, as an historian he also had to be an activist. He suffered for that and his work reflects this. Aspects of his later accounts of the history of our area are tamed by the need to demonstrate that he was a truly reformed character. Nevertheless, a closer reading cannot help but detect that radical spark, as well as the arrogance, which caused him so much trouble. If we still value his work, as we should, perhaps it is now the duty of those of us still practising the local historian's trade to fan that spark a little.

POSTSCRIPT

Huddersfield Daily Examiner 6'th June 1920

"The death occurred at the Huddersfield Royal Infirmary in the early hours of yesterday morning of Daniel Frederick Edward Sykes of Ainsley House, Marsden. Mr Sykes, who was 64 years of age, had been in failing health for some time, and it became necessary that he should undergo an operation. He entered the Royal Infirmary a week ago yesterday and the operation was performed on Monday. Mr Sykes however died as stated from heart failure.
He leaves a widow (who was the only daughter of the late Rev. Joseph Curry, vicar of North Kelsey, Lincolnshire) and two married sons. The interment will take place at Marsden Church on Wednesday."

NOTES

I have resisted the temptation to footnote this piece. The reason for this is not any shyness about the sources on which it is based but rather because they are so few. Listing them below may be adequate guidance for those who want to pursue this story and, perhaps, take it further.

The Slaithwaite Guardian and Colne Valley News 13th July to 7th September (weekly) 1900
Colne Valley Guardian 11th June 1920.
Huddersfield Daily Examiner 4th March 1899; 6th June 1920.
Huddersfield Daily Chronicle 4th November 1893
The Northern Pioneer various dates 3rd March 1883 to 12th May 1883.
S. Papworth, "A Neglected Yorkshire Novelist *Dalesman* June 1977 pp. 203-205.
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Yorkshire Sings:

A musical and social phenomenon

Angela Griffith

This article is a greatly-shortened version of the author's thesis for M.A. in Adult Education at Bretton Hall College of the University of Leeds 1993; a fully adult-illustrated copy of this is deposited in Huddersfield Library.

On moving to Yorkshire seventeen years ago, and coming from a family where singing was the predominant musical activity. I was intrigued by two questions. Firstly, what were these 'Sings' which were advertised during the summer months in local newspapers? we are all familiar with the verb 'to sing' - but a noun? (There is little written information concerning Sings.) Secondly, as a persistent frequenter of book sales I was unable to understand why there were so many second-hand copies of Mozart's Twelfth Mass available, a work with which I was not familiar. My enquiries were to reveal that the phenomenon of Sings appears to be peculiar to Yorkshire, and to a particular area of Yorkshire: roughly that lying between and around Huddersfield, Wakefield and Barnsley.

Unlike the Whitsuntide Walks when everyone sings hymns in their church or chapel groups, the Sings are characterized by a lack of banners denoting a particular church or chapel, instead, all denon-dnations walk, stand and sing mingled, an observer being unable to distinguish between them. Although predominantly middleclass and chapel, the Sings were, (and in some cases still are) an important factor both in bringing together people of every class and every religion, and in raising funds for local charities. Although not originally formed with a view to fund-raising, this soon became one of the main functions, most of the money raised prior to the introduction of the National Health Service being donated to the local hospitals and Nursing Associations.
Because of this, many became known as 'Hospital Sings' or 'Hospital Sunday Festivals'. Other charities which benefited included the Huddersfield Deaf and Dumb Institute and the Bradford Eye and Ear Hospital. There were exceptions, when for example, Slaithwaite Sing gave its collection towards a new swimming pool; Holmfirth, where with the consent of the Infirmary authorities a portion of the receipts between 1889 and 1903 were reserved for a new platform; and Honley, where all funds have always been directed towards the Old Folks' Treat.

The idea seems to have originated in Longwood, Huddersfield, when Jabez Iredale, secretary of the Longwood Working Men's Club, met with a group of friends to sing outside the Thornhill Reading Rooms (now a hairdresser's shop) one day in 1873. This would not have been considered unusual - 'Everyone loved to sing, they were people of the hills, a love of singing was innate' (Esme Shackleton). Besides being members of the Longwood Choral and Philharmonic Societies, people used to meet to sing and play in each other's houses and gardens. Other kinds of meetings would often finish with a singsong. The following year the men decided to hold their Sing at the foot of Nab End Tower at 7 a.m. on a Sunday morning as no-one would be at work or church. It was not unheard of to sing hymns outside - Salendine Nook Church held an outdoor service once a month but the Sings at Longwood had no particular religious affiliation. From Jabez Iredale's first germ of an idea all other Sings emanated. A collection was taken and distributed to the local sick and needy. Later, with police permission there was sometimes a house to house collection. and occasionally tins were placed in local hostelries. Many people remember large sheets place on four poles at the entrance to the Sings, the money being thrown into the middle.

Sing Sunday was usually, though not always, held at the same time as the village feast. It was a time of great rejoicing, open-house, and meeting with friends and relations not seen since the previous Sing. It was also a time for showing off new clothes and new friendships, being seen with one's 'young man' and introducing him to the wider family. One young lady was asked to go for a walk after Flockton Sing in August and on New Year's Day she was married! Contemporary photographs show just what fashion parades they were. Cannon Hall Estate provided its tenants with tins of paint in order to smarten up their cottages for the occasion.

So what exactly is a Sing? A Sing consists of' a choir drawn mainly from local churches and chapels, which performs a few well-known choruses. (The Gleria from Mozart's Twelth Mass being a favourite) and is joined by all other participants for the singing of the hymns which are printed in a programme. A hymn 'In Memorial' is sung, should anyone have died during the year, one of the most popular being 'Deep Harmony'. Sometimes there is an address, sometimes prayers, and often the National Anthem. The Sing takes place either early Sunday morning (for example, Mollicar Woods near Castle Hill 7.30 a.m., or Honley 7 a.m.), or more commonly during Sunday afternoon, in order that church services may still be attended. The only exception appears to be Hepworth who still hold their Sing on Feast Monday, necessitating time off work or school for participants. The conductor is usually a local musician; the Skelmanthorpe balance sheet of 1924 unusually shows him being paid 12/- for his services. The accompaniment was originally provided by a harmonium, band, orchestra or string group, with the exception of Mollicar Woods which has always been unaccompanied. The band gives one or two' selections' during the proceedings and in times past often held an evening concert for band funds. Nowadays an electronic keyboard is sometimes used. Some process to one venue, others walk or drive round to different venues

within one area. Processions were particularly important in Barnsley where the various miners' lodges and friendly societies paraded with their bands. Generally speaking the Sings are predominantly adult affairs but New Mill particularly had special 'Young People's Hymns', for example, What a friend we have in Jesus' (1976), and 'Stand up, stand up for Jesus' (1981). They are organised by a committee drawn from the various churches and chapels in the area, notable exceptions being Fenay Bridge and Lepton and Bradley and Colne Bridge which were organised by the Star Buffalo Lodge and Working Men's Club respectively.

Whereas in the early part of the twentieth century many villages had their own Sing, at the present time of writing (May 1993) only three remain in the Barnsley area. The Huddersfield area has fared better with eight still taking place.

Social and Musical background: Education In the late nineteenth century most music in school was confined to class singing. This was inevitable in that all the major educators stressed the importance of vocal music both morally and spiritually. The teacher's certificate awarded for teaching tonic sol-fa was considered of great importance in the West Riding: in 1895, twenty-five teachers gained certificates compared with only four in Birmingham and three in Liverpool. The work of Hullah, Mainzer, Glover and Curwen in the development of various sol-fa systems had a profound effect on music in Victorian England and was largely responsible for the development of vast choral societies and festivals. John Curwen was born at the manse at Heckmondwike, four miles north of Huddersfield. His original aim was to improve the singing in Sunday Schools, the music providing 'the indirect means of aiding worship, temperance and culture, of holding young men and women among good influences, of reforming character, of spreading Christianity 13. For all the people I interviewed, tonic sol-fa is the most vivid memory they have of school music, always on a Friday afternoon and always learning traditional British songs. Scores of the standard oratoric repertoire were republished in tonic sol-fa, as were anthems for use in church. Surprisingly, tonic sol-fa does not appear in any Sing programmes.

Whilst the first Sing at Longwood appears not to have its origins in the Methodist church, many do. The Methodists were and are enthusiastic singers, some would say more so than church goers. It has been suggested that employers were enthusiastic about music because it prevented drunkenness and therefore led to a more efficient workforce, doubtless there is some truth in this[5].

The relationship between the Sings and the health Service

In order to attend a hospital as an in - or out - patient it was necessary to be recommended by two 'upstanding' members of the community. Such was their position that the members of the Sing committees could be called upon to perform this very necessary function and indicated this on their programmes. BY 1935 this was no longer required, a doctor's letter being all that was necessary. Sing committees were also allowed to have representatives on the hospital Boards of Governors, Jabez Iredale of Longwood fulfilling this position from 1895[7].

In the years leading up to the introduction of the National Health Service, the Holmfirth committee began to think that one of the main functions of the Sing would be at an end, and decided to put all their energies into the organisation of a competitive music festival for children, the town hall in Holmfirth being an ideal venue. It was inaugurated in 1946 and is still going strong today, attracting such adjudicators as Sydney Northcote (1953), Eric Thiman (1954), Anthony Hopkins (1958), Michael Head (1959) and Derrick Cantrill (1973). Unfortunately the Holmfirth Sing did come to an end in 1992 due to lack of support from the public rather than the committee.

Evidence from printed programmes Besides the minute books and reminiscences, the printed Sing programmes themselves are of course a valuable source of information, both sociological and musical. It is surprising that so few remain in existence, considering that at least 2,000 were produced for each Sing in the early days.

Copyright was often a source of consternation both from the performing and printing aspects. The sing committees made strenuous efforts to determine the sources of words and music and so avoid prosecution. However, they were sometimes caught out. For example, on May 7th 1918, the Holmfirth committee received a letter from Mr John Park of Stainland, claiming £2/2/0 for the infringement of the copyright of the tune 'Supplication' in 1916 and making a charge of 10/6 if used in 1918. Costs varied, only 2/6 being paid to J.Wood and sons of Huddersfield for the use of the tune 'Peace' in 1924. Sometimes the charge actually prevented the printing of the tune, for example, in 1935, Novello required £1/1/0 for the use of 'Deerhurst' and so it was rejected.

The proprietors of the Cross Printing Works, Stainland, appear to be the most vociferous in making their claims, and along with other local printers saw the Sings as a legitimate source of income, buying up the rights to as many hymns as possible. The Performing Rights Society was founded in 1914, and in 1928, obviously finding a copyright affair of the previous year rather tedious, over the use of the tune 'Seth', the Holmfirth secretary wrote asking for details of membership regarding possible infringement of copyright. This obviously bore fruit as in 1929 the following announcement appeared in the programme: 'The performing Rights Society has kindly granted free permission for the use of its repertoire on this occasion.'

Permission was also required for the orchestration of copyright works. This was comparatively easy to obtain but such firms as J. Curwen and Sons Ltd. insisted that the arrangements remained their property, to be borrowed subsequently at any time without charge except for postage. Local composers were also keen to have their own tunes made copyright, for example Mr A.H. Green's tune 'Holmfirth' was sent to the copyright receipt office in the British Museum in 1929, the copyright to belong to the Holmfirth Feast Sing Committee. The tunes were usually given local names, so we come across 'Magdale', 'Victoria

Park', 'Ossett' and 'Stocksbridge'. 'Staincross' composed by Ralph Sowerby was also printed separately on card and used to raise additional funds. 'Roseleigh' is dedicated by, L.K. Green 'to Helen Floyd with gratitude'; she was a tireless worker and president of Holmfirth Sings. Christian names were also popular. for example the title 'Elizabeth'. given to an arrangement of the tune 'Drink to me only', again by, L.K. Green and an intriguing one simply called 'Fred'. A tune adapted from Mozart's 'Eine Kleine Nachtmusik' appears in Burnlee's programme of 1935 and in 1956 Mapplewell and Staincross used one arranged from 'The Magic Flute'. In 1928 Edred Booth composed a to an existing tune, 'Castle Street' for Holmfirth Sing. This is the only occasion that I have found so far of a descant having been sung at a Sing. Some committees were inundated with tunes, so much so that a recommendation was made that 'no local composer who has a tune published one year shall be allowed to have one in the programme the following year' 9. In 1936 the Holmfirth committee initiated a musical competition for original tunes, the first prize was won by Mr N. Battye of Scholes with his tune 'Well Green'.

The Sings continued throughout both World Wars although other amateur musical institutions, such as Lindley Operatic Society, ceased functioning. Especially during the First World War the charitable work of the Sings took on a new importance, they asked for and received extra large contributions; patriotic music was featured, and those killed in action were listed in the programmes. During the Second World War, economies had to be made, for example, at Holmfirth fewer programmes were printed, there were no posters, and no instrumentalists.

Other events of national importance gave rise to the printing of special programmes: 1857 Queen Victoria's Jubilee, 1911 King George V's Coronation, 1935 King George V's Jubilee (also celebrating the 250th anniversary of the birth of Handel), 1951 Festival of Britain, 1953 Queen Elizabeth's Coronation. The death of King Edward VII was marked in many Sings in 1910 by a special hymn 'Memoriam', as was the sinking of the Titanic with 'Nearer my God to Thee' (Holmfirth 1912). Kirkburton Sing had ended in 1969 and it was hoped that the Queen's Jubilee in 1977 would attract singers and musicians from throughout the district as it did in its heyday, and be sufficient impetus to resurrect it. Musicians from Bretton Hall College formed the orchestra and besides the usual hymns and choruses, British National Songs were included plus maypole dancing by the Girl Guides. Unfortunately the Sing soon died out again mainly due to the lack of a suitable venue, the ground being used for Sunday sport.

The centenary of any Sing is of course a time of great celebration. For theirs, Mapplewell and Staincross produced a glossy booklet and invited actor Brian Blessed to attend the proceedings. Hundreds of people attended, no doubt some attracted by the appearance of a personality'. Skelmanthorpe Sing had been 'saved' in July 1975 by the appearance of television personality Simon Welfare. Support from the upper classes is evident in a few programmes. Lady Sutherland appears as president of Mapplewell and Staincross Sing - year after year the same members of the mining community waited at the gate to greet her as their employer. The only year she did not attend was 1926, the year of the General Strike. when her place as speaker was taken by Herbert Smith. the Miners' President from Barnsley. Similarly, Joe Pogson, a self-made man and owner of Pogson's Mill. was president of Slaithwaite Sing. In those days the local gentry and manufacturers actively supported local initiatives such as the Sing and expected their employees to do likewise. J.M. Spencer- Stanhope lent the grounds of Cannon Hall park for Cawthome Sing and Sir Joseph Crossland Esq. became a patron of Hillhouse and Birkby Musical Festival.

The most complete collection of programmes is that of Mapplewell and Staincross where the committee has kept one from each Sing plus a list of the dates when each hymn has been sung. This enables us to see that 'The Old Hundredth' has been the most popular hymn followed by 'Rock of Ages' and 'Worsley'. The choice was to some extent determined however by the block available at the printers and whether the committee or printing works were prepared to pay for new blocks. There are typically choruses from 'The Messiah', 'Creation', 'Judas Maccabeus', 'Elijah', 'Samson' -and Mozart's 'Twelfth Mass', all standard works which the chapel choirs would have known intimately. A novelty at Holmfirth was the anthem '0 Saviour Friend'. a setting of Handel's 'Largo' bought by L.K. Green in memory of his father.

The first Mapplewell and Staincross balance sheet appears in 1915 when £65/1/7 was collected, the £25 given yearly by Miss Fountain (later Lady Sutherland) being a considerable proportion of this. After a rather erratic rise to £115/1/1 in 1924, followed by a fall to £101/16/4 in 1925, as was to be expected, the year of the General Strike produced only £69/4/0. In Birkby a rumour was circulated that Holmfirth Sing was to be postponed due to the strike, so the committee decided to insert three extra advertisements in the local press stating that this was not so. Following no particular pattern, the highest amount raised was £146/17/8 in 1944, no doubt enhanced by the £30 contributed from the boxing bouts at Towncroft Working Men's Club. An amazing £2,508.88 was raised at the centenary celebrations of which the following was distributed:

Edgerton' bedrest area furniture	
Barnsley Hospital	£1,819.62
Friends' minibus appeal	500.00
Old People's Treat Fund	50.00
Royston Salvation Army Band	50,00
St. John's Ambulance Brigade	50.00

Here, surely, is justification, on social and community grounds, for the existence of the Sings.

Mollicar Woods Sing

Mollicar Woods Sing is unique in that it is the only Sing which is totally unaccompanied. Like so many others, it is Methodist in origin and remains predominantly so today, the times of the services and various activities of Almondbury Methodist Church (now the only Methodist Church in the area) being printed on the programme. The Sing has been held every Whit Sunday since 1900. Mr Arthur Swift, Zion choirmaster, conducted the first Sings and handed over to the next choirmaster, Tom Lockwood,

who took charge until 1935. He was followed by local musician James H. Marsden, a founder member of the Huddersfield Methodist Choir. Mr Marsden conducted for forty-four years until he was eighty, and died on 'Sing Sunday' the following year. He was an able composer who had his part-song 'Blow, blow thou winter wind' published by Stainer and Bell, and several of his hymn tunes were used for Sings. John Sykes took over for a while, and the Sing is now conducted by the present choirmaster, John Robinson.

Arthur Swift's idea was that it would be much more pleasant to hold the final choir rehearsal of the Whitsuntide hymns out of doors. Mollicar Woods was chosen as a suitable place, out of sight and earshot of Almondbury. It was so successful that the practice continued, and began raising funds for charitable causes, for example, £12/13/0 being divided in 1923 between the Infirmary and Zion trust fund. The Sing follows the same pattern each year: after congregating at 7.30 a.m. and singing six hymns in the field near the stream (cows moving freely amongst the participants), the choir walks through the wood to the old oak tree (really a beech). Another six hymns are sung beneath the spreading branches, often including one for the children on their own. Here is a Sing which positively encourages children, recognising that it is through their enthusiasm that the tradition will survive. A climb over a stile enables the crowd to be counted and money to be collected. Nowadays the number varies between 100 and 150, in former times there were many more: 7,000 in 1930, but only 2,000 in 1931 when there was torrential rain. Even so, such was the attraction that people travelled from Wooldale, Meltham, Paddock and Linthwaite in order to take part. The final singing point is reached after a short walk up a hill. There is a wonderful feeling singing the remaining six hymns high up and looking over towards Castle Hill. Breakfast follows, provided by the Famley Tyas Women's Institute. The one big criticism of Mollicar Woods Sing is that no music is provided, thus preventing confident four-part singing. Mollicar Woods has an atmosphere very different from other Sings, it has an overall air of religious devotion, of being very at one with nature and the world. Emma Burgess remembers always being late as a child and hearing the beautiful, almost eerie effect of voices wafting through the trees on a still Sunday morning. Honley Early Morning Sing was started in 1926 as a direct result of that at Mollicar.

In 1929 the Sing made headlines with the damage 7,000 people caused to walls and crops, and in 1930 it was decided to sing only at the first stopping point. Police were on hand to curb any unruly behaviour.

On October 14th 1930 Tom Lockwood was a prime mover in the founding of the 'Association of Sing and Musical Festivals in Huddersfield' of which he became chairman. The committee's first aim was to take steps to prevent overlapping Sing dates. As Tom Lockwood pointed out, We are all working for the same object, yet we injure each other financially and numerically in respect of both singers and players.' The second aim was to endeavour to prepare a list of non-copyright tunes for which the association would take responsibility. Another was to advise its members to take out platform insurance; this did not apply to. Mollicar, or to Slaithwaite where the cricket pitch seating was used. Most Sings had their own platforms or borrowed them.

Longwood Sing

The first minutes of the all-male Sing committee at Longwood date from 1878, by which time the Sing had grown to be a much grander affair than that of 1874. Among the resolutions are the following:

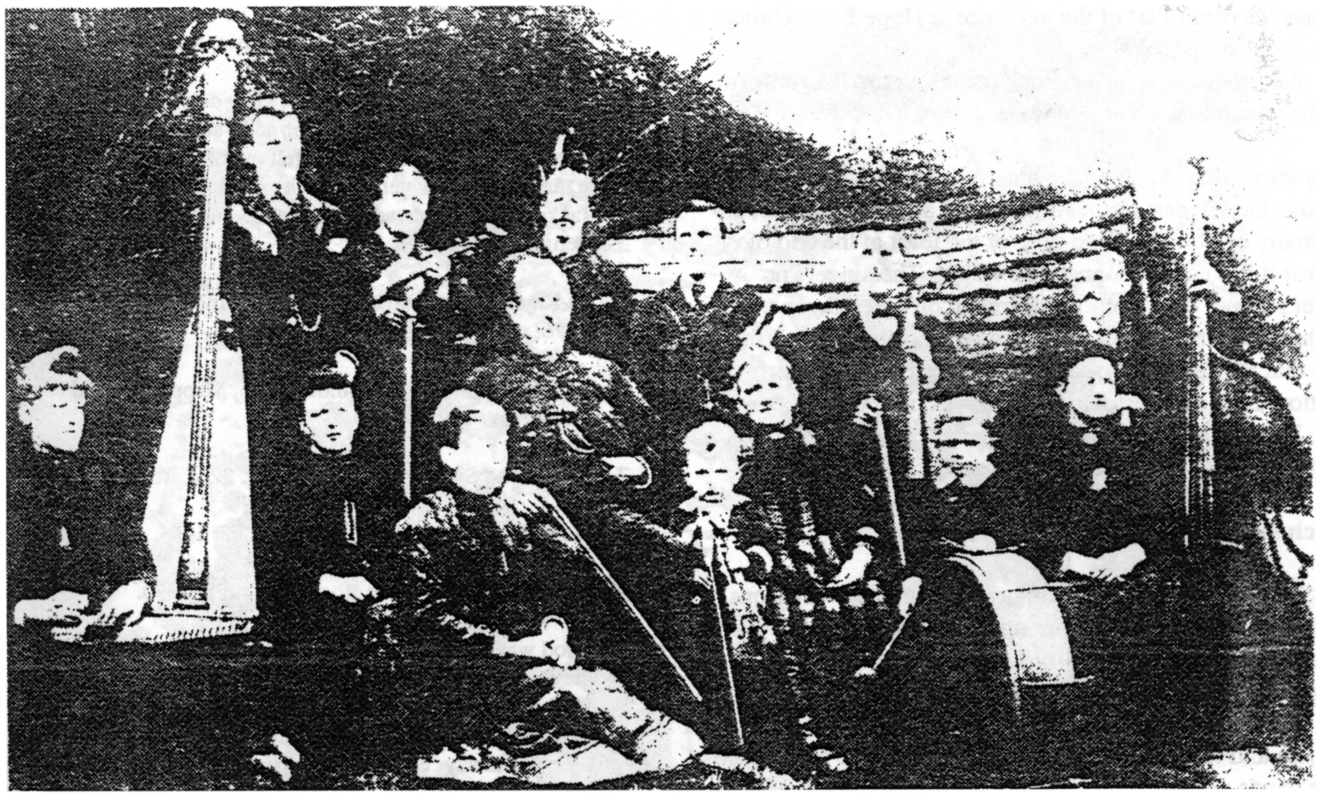
3rd: that we have an open air performance at Nab End on Longwood feast Sunday morning, weather permitting.
Should it be unfavourable that it be adjourned to the Mechanics Hall.
4th: that the piece (sic) performed be selections from Judas Maccabeus.
5th: that Mr. Oliver Ainley be leader of the band.

The refreshments were to be provided in the Reading Room and necessitated the ordering of '3 stone of flour baked into teacakes, 2 hams, a gallon barrel of beer, 1 lb of coffee, 4 lbs of sugar, 2 quarts of new milk, 10 lbs of new cheese, U- worth of cut cake [oat cake?], 18 yards of white ribbon' (for the committee to wear). After the Sing in August 1879, the balance of £5.53 was deposited in the Halifax Building Society in the name of the 'Longwood Tower Oratorio Committee', the surplus after paying expenses to be handed over to the Infirmary.

With the success of the Longwood Sing, other villages had followed suit and were borrowing music and stands, 1d to be paid per item if not returned within 14 days. The bread cutter purchased in 1903 was also hired out at a fee of 1/-.

At Longwood the meat teas were dispensed with in 1912 and replaced with 'plain tea and sweets'. There was always the worry that there would be insufficient food, especially as non-singers had a tendency to sneak in - (at Kirkburton: 't' Committee wor sore afraid 'at they couldn't feed all 'at coom; but then, tha sees —Burton Trinity-wor open haahse for all 'at coom to 'Burton, en nobody wo'd gooa hungry as long as they'd a fiddle or a — Messiah-under ther airm'10.) In 1948, to celebrate the 75th annual Longwood Sing, after a lapse of 11 years, refreshments were again provided for the 80 musicians and 100 singers (that is, those who stood on the platform and sang the choruses).

Longwood has always been easily accessible by train. Special trains were organised, and in 1901 permission had been given for trams to run on Sundays as long as they did not pass the Parish Church during services. The drivers 'being exposed to the public eye' were asked to wear their best suits on Sundays. For many, the Sing had become a 'good day out', some families even going so far as to attend Sings in various towns and villages on every single weekend in the summer; one instrumentalist found this unrelenting round exhausting and deliberately broke her 'A' string so she could not play, but Oliver Ainley, leader of the first Longwood Sing, seen here in his garden with his



Oliver Ainley, leader of the first Longwood Sing, seen here in his garden with his family c. 1880.
The infant has tiny violin, the four-year old has the drum

Part of the audience at Hope Bank United Sing, August 2nd 1908. The older men are wearing frock coats and top hats.

family c. 1880. The infant has a tiny violin, the four-year old has the drum Part of the audience at Hope Bank United Sing. August 2nd 1908.
The older men are wearing frock coats and top hats unfortunately someone lent her a new one.

Longwood Sing is one of the handful surviving today, and remains the largest, around 500 people attending. Although originally celebrated at the time of the feast at the end of August it has no real connection with it. The singers no longer sit on a temporary platform but on a tiered concrete amphitheatre built about 1933 and now covered in graffiti. Like that at Mollicar Woods, it takes place in a wonderful position, high up overlooking the towns, mills and distant hills. Perhaps a less devotional experience than that of Mollicar, but nevertheless a very impressive one.

Conclusion

The Sings have reduced in number for a variety of reasons, one is that many chapel choirs no longer exist. These formed the nucleus of the Sings and in places such as Mapplewell where they do survive, the Sing survives also.

The rise and fall of the Sings follows exactly the path of the brass bands and choral societies which enjoyed enormous success at the turn of the century, developing as they did from ideals of self-improvement, moral uprightness and philanthropic benevolence 12. But why Huddersfield? Initially, obviously because Jabez Iredale was a local man, but without the strong musical tradition the idea would never have borne fruit and developed into the amazing phenomenon which it did. There is still a strong musical tradition here. It is true that music has been one of the major vehicles through which the people of Huddersfield ... have been able to impose their town on navonal consciousness'[13].

The Sings were of great value socially, allowing a mixture of classes and religious denominations which would not normally occur. The Sings necessitated co-operation between the churches and chapels whose choirmaster and ministers would take it in turns to conduct and speak, and between the Sing committees who tent and borrowed music and equipment. Professional and amateur musicians could play and sing side by side. It was an area of life in which women could take part, they being 'earnestly requested to attend'. The whole community could join in, whether able to sing beautifully in parts, or just 'keep the tune going'. Dr Steve Reicher of Exeter University studied crowd behaviour and found that singing is one of the main ways of affirming collective identity 14. It is appropriate that the last words should go to the participants themselves:

REFERENCES

1 The obituary of Jabez Iredale (Huddersfield Examiner July 4th 1925) although not contemporary, gives details of the origins of the first Sings.

2. St. Paul's Church of England Infants School Logbook, Oct. 10th 1885.

3. J.S. Cur-wen, Memorials ol John Cur-wen, 1882, quoted in B. Rainbow, The Land Without Music, Novello 1967, p, 140.

4 I don't like the church services. They don't sing there like they did at chapel. I went to this one and I started off away at the same strength as usual, and I felt out of it. I had to soft pedal it, and after a few verses I gave up altogether.' Quoted in B. Jackson and D. Marsden, Education and the Working Class, Penguin, 1966, p.79.

5. H. Raynor. Music and Socierv Since 1815, Barne and Jerkins, 1976, p.95

6. For examples see Netherthong 1925, Mapplewell and Staincross 1925.

7. Longwood Sing Minute Book, Aug. 22nd, 1895.

8. Holmfirth Sing programme, May 22nd 1955.

9. Holmfirth Sing Minute Book, April 15th 1930.

10. Food was an important part of the Sing, and family traditions grew up around it. Mrs Louis France (a friend of George Iredale), remembers Bottoms Wood Sing principally because she and her mother were invited to tea by a relative and the fare was always cold boiled salmon, a rare treat in those days. Brenda Scott discovered the traditional Holmfirth meal of veal pie followed by 'Cah PoW (cow pie, custard pie), see Where the Pratty Flowers Grow, Yorkshire Arts Circus, 1988, p.48.

11. R. Brook, The Tramways 91 Huddersfield, The Advertiser Press Ltd., p. 36.1

12. Dave Russell, 'Music in Huddersfield c. 1820-1914', Huddersfield, a Most Handsome Town, ed. E.A. Hilary Haigh, Kirklees Cultural Services, 1992, p.675.

13. W. Weber, Music and the Middle Class, Croom Helm Ltd., 1975, P. 10 1.

14. The Guardian, Sept. 11th 1992.

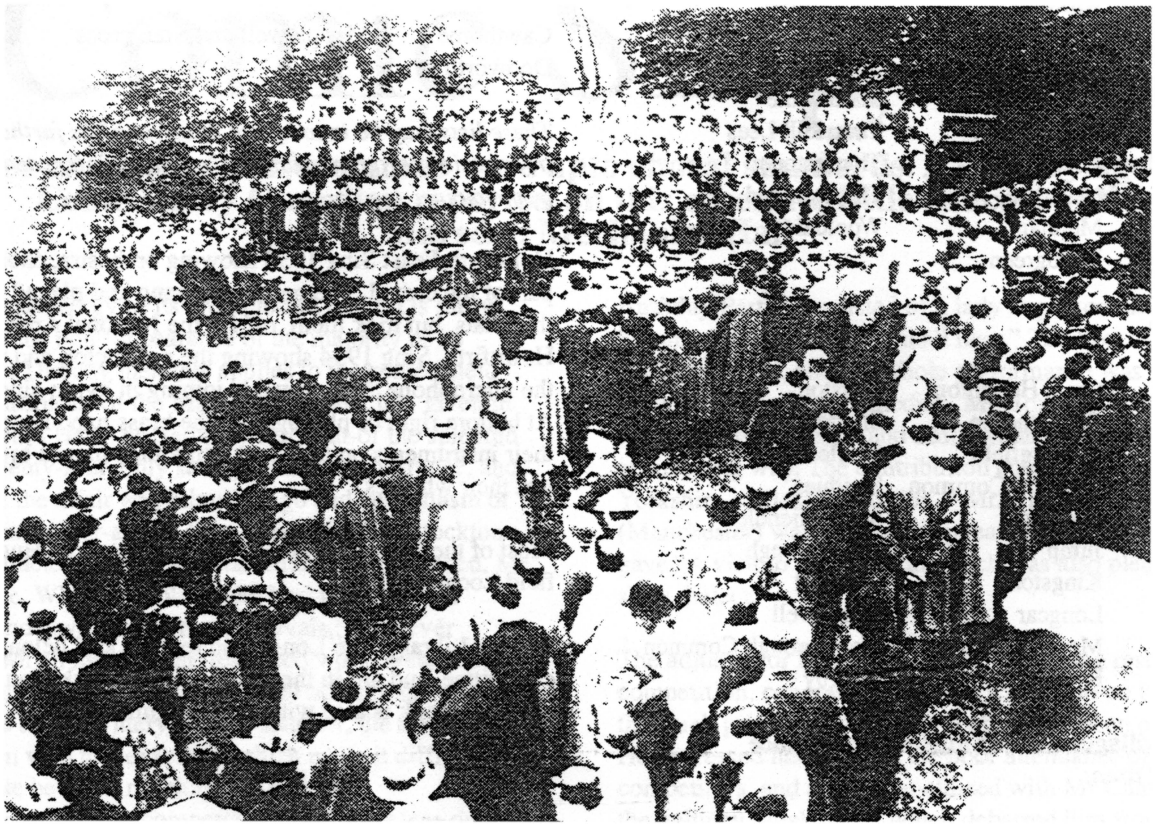
15. Holmfirth programme, May 13th 1923.

The committee are deeply indebted to the willing, capable and loyal host of Musicians, who with voice, or instrument, contribute so much to the attractiveness and musical success attained, causing strangers (who know not the inbred love of the people of this locality) to marvel that so fine a combination of Musicians can voluntarily be brought together. May such spirit of mutual helpfulness never die[15].

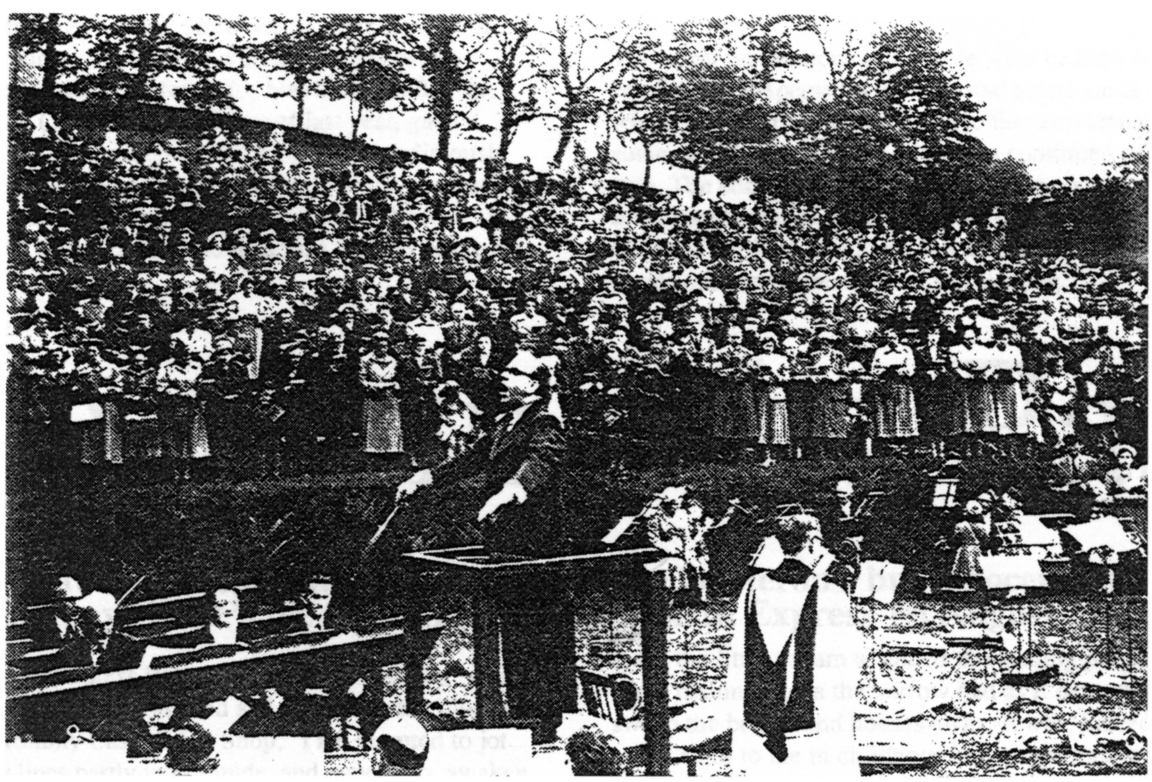
Towns and villages known to have had Sings, but which no longer take place

Huddersfield area

Almondbury	Golcar	Netheroyd Hill
Armitage Bridge	Grange Moor	Netherthong
Berry Brow	Hade Edge	Netherton
Birkby	Hillhouse	New Mill
Bottoms Wood	Hinchliffe Mill	Paddock
Bradley	Holmbridge	Primrose Hill
Brighouse	Holmfirth	Ravensknowle
Bumlee	Hope Bank	Savile Town



Holmfirth Feast Sing 1938 showing orchestra, choir, and part of the crowd.
The gentlemen sang and played wearing their hats, but took them off the National Anthem



Holmfirth Sing 1954 showing the conductor, and vicar at the microphone. The crowd is joining in hymn-singing.
At bottom right of photograph, the brass band have left their instruments on the grass while they have
a break to wet their whistles

Colne Bridge
Cowcliffe
Crosland Moor
Dalton
Deighton
Deriby Dale
Dunford Bridge
Farrowfield
Fenay Bridge
Flockton
Huddersfield
Kirkburton
Kirkheaton
Lepton
Lindley
Linthwaite
Lockwood
Marsden
Meltham
Moldgreen
Scapegoat Hill
Sheepridge
Shelley
Shepley
Slaithwaite
Thorrihill Lees
Thurlestone
Thurstonland
Wooldale

Barnsley area

Ackworth
Ardsley
Barnsley
Blacker Hill
Brierley
Cudworth
Darfield
Darton
Featherstone
Gawber
Great Houghton
Grimethorpe
Hemingfield
Hoviand Common
Higham
Jump
Kingstone
Longcar
Monk Bretton
Ryhill
Royston
Shafton
Sharleston
Smithies
South Hiendley
Stainborough
Stairfoot
Wombwell
Worsborough Common
Wragby

Towns and villages where Sings still take place
Huddersfield area:

Emley
Hepworth
Honley
Ingbirchworth
Longwood
Mollicar Woods
Penistone
Skelmanthorpe

Barnsley area:

Cawthome
Dodworth
Mapplewell and Staincross

These lists may be incomplete. If anyone has further information; or photographs, I would be interested to hear from you.

Holmfirth Feast Sing 1938 showing orchestra, choir and part of the crowd. The gentlemen sang and played wearing their hats, but took them off for the National Anthem Holmfirth. Sing 1954 showing the conductor, and vicar at the microphone. The crowd is joining in hymn-singing. At bottom right of photograph, the brass band have left their instruments on the grass while they have a break to wet their whistles

Most of the log books and minute books are in Huddersfield Local

History Library. The Longwood records still belong to the committee, and are in the care of Esme Shackleton. Honley's book is also with their committee.

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Comic Singing:

Nor all musical performances were upto choral standards. A century ago the Colne Valley Guardian reported on this eccentric little concert at the Marsden Mechanics Hall

In spite of the energy of its promoters, a contest is sadly damped by the non" appearance of the majority of its competitors Directly then this applies to the contest held under the auspices. of the Marsden Cricket Club, given in the Mechanics Hall - on Saturday last. Out-of the splendid entry of twenty-four, only seven put in an appearance, and in a degree the affair was minus the go and enthusiasm of its predecessor year-ago. A large competition at Stockton on-Tees attracted several who had entered for Marsden. Mr. E. Armitage, Whistling soloist and bird imitator, was engaged, and gave selections at intervals,; the clever manner it which many of the-feathered world were imitated was' astonishing. From the clear shrill notes of the nightingale to the twittery of - the sparrow, the imitations were- given with that exactness which made it difficult to discriminate between mimicry and reality.

The order in which the competitors would sing was decided by ballot, Mr. Bert Fox (Dewsbury) being the first to appear-, "Just in a motherly way," was the contribution, but the piece proved rather tame. and void of humour.

Mr.. C. H. Allen followed with "Whistling Willie," in which the whistling solo was given in a clever in manner. The selection was full of Witty Yorkshire dialect.

The Bradford comedian, Mr. Harry Charnock came No 3, with "Smiler Party," which piece was accompanied with plenty of witticism; but a false commencement of one of the verses no doubt forfeited for him the second prize.

Mr. Fred Hall (York), a prizewinner of last year, gave a smart selection, intermingled with a few jokes judiciously spun, and quickly gained the appreciation of the audience, concluding with a patriotic version of ' South, Africa."

No. 5, by Mt. Harry Leybourne (Halifax), Farmer Buggin's Birthday Party,' consisted of a lady impersonation, in which he sung "Whisper, and- I shall hear." The "get up" was distinctly good, and the whole performance was - full of merit. Another York comedian, Mr. Tom Downey, followed with- " Peter Simple," and imitated the singing of a trio in an amusing way. The contribution contained an amount of Yorkshire stories' in addition. ' Mr. Alfred B .Millard (Manchester) was the last to appear in the competition. He gave "A visit to London," in which was also plenty of York shire dialect.

The adjudicator Mr Wm. Lund, in giving the result of the competition, congratulated the Cricket Club on the, thorough principles on with the affair had been organised. He expressed his regret at the poor attendance of the competitors, and also, sympathised with Mr Charnock in the unlucky breakdown, which debarred him from securing the second 'prize-' No. 4 on the programme (Mr fred Hall); 2nd, No.1 (Mr Harry Leybourne); 3rd, No.3 (Mr C.W. Allen); 4th No 20 (Mr Tom Downey).

The prizes were £3 Ios., £2, - £1, and Ios. The successful competitors afterwards accommodated the audience with several selections, meeting with loud and vociferous applause

The vocal productions as a whole were of high standard, carefully interspersed with the usual smart yarns and patter, which give "go" and brightness to the performance. In some cases, however, the latter was continued to disadvantage. The committee of the club may be congratulated on the achievement of another financial success, and in the hands of Mr J.W. Armitage, F.R.C.O., ably fulfilled the duties of accompanist during the evening.

Savouring the Past

John Lawson relished happy memories of the boisterous, but innocent, visits to Tommy Castle's pie shop (from the Holmfirth Express 1st August 1914)

In reading the "Express Popular Guide to Holmfirth," many strange memories are awakened and on seeing the illustration, "Old Tommy Castle's Pie Shop," I am tempted to jot down a few lines partly in gratitude, and may be to awaken equally pleasant memories in many a resident of the old town. May I say I was not born ten yards from Tommy's shop, so that my earliest recollections centre around Higgin Bridge, on which, after a heavy rain storm or a sudden thaw, the little stream assumed threatening proportions, and came rushing down the narrow bed as if determined to sweep the bridge and houses away. It was, indeed, a grandly awful sight to me in childhood days, and often when it has overflowed its banks (which was common in winter), it seemed to threaten to overwhelm all in its way. To me it was a rushing, roaring torrent, and often I have seen the old grey heads shake with apprehension at its turbulence. On

dark nights, when there was no moon and no gas, simply awful. Old Tommys shop was built on one side, up to the stream, the back into Rotcher, and to me, as a lad, it looked always in danger of the rocks falling and burying poor old Tommy in his shop. Early in life I became a regular admirer of old Tommy. He was a short stiff man, with a shuffling gait, a mild, genial face, and kindly voice. He generally wore a check cotton jacket, not unlike a ladys blouse of the present day, only not so full; and a white apron. He was clean shaven, had straggling hair, and an appearance almost as if he apolgised for being there. He was a popular man with us lads, for he sold biscuit paper one halfpenny a roll. This was paper upon which the old man had used to bake his noted finger biscuits, and a very thin portion of the biscuit being left on the paper, we lads eagerly bought it at the enormous price of one halfpenny a roll (about two yards). We also had great respect for him, because for many years he baked the school cakes for the school feast, and every child received one. Old Tommy's school cakes were something to remember, and were the most popular cakes in the valley. Tommy also was great on twopenny (veal) pies, with such gravy. Never was there such pies and never will there be again. I shall never forget the first time I had twopence, and went into Tommy's parlour to have pie. Talk about luscious, it was delicious! I have never found such a treat since. Either the pies have altered or I have.

James Turner

On busy days old Tommy had the assistance of another old character, James Turner. It is impossible to rightly picture in words these two old veterans. Tommy was short, and somewhat bent; James was straight as an arrow, and was never known to be in a hurry, or get excited. He was always dressed in drab, and Quaker cut. To see him sat on one side of the fire, smoking his churchwarden pipe, calm as a marble statue, a smile on his face as he occasionally opened his eyes to watch the smoke curl up to the ceiling, and to regard the deliberate way he would take a whiff and then wait so calmly as if measuring the effect of the last exhalation, was a sight for the gods. Content was writ in capital all over his face. How often has the vision of old James Turner come to me in the hurry and rush of life, to warn me to beware of worry scurry! But I am afraid all to no purpose. He was an honoured member of the Society of Friends, and beloved by all who knew him. Thus these two old men, both bachelors, who had a smile for every customer, and who balanced one another so admirably. Tommy was a bit hasty; James placid and calm to the point of irritation. One scrambling about in his effort to serve; the other straight as a guards man, and deliberate as a judge pronouncing sentence of death.

On Saturday Nights

Saturday night was the gala night, when all the choicest spirits met, and held high feast in Tommy's parlour. Rough, boisterous, hobble dehoy lads we were, and for the profit he got out of our twopence, tolerating our presumptious conduct and intolerant demands, such as "Tha's forgotten to put tha meit in this, Tommy," or else, "It wor a very little cauf." Tommy would do an extra shuffle into the shop and back, while James would quickly look over the shoulder of the complainer, and say, "You want a drop more gravy, perhaps" Another would complain that "th" pies grew less and less," to which old Tommy would reply, "Ralee, lads yo' are too bad; I do mi best for yer." Then one of the boys would say, "Ah, I believe yer dun, Tommy but yer niver forget yersen, old chap, Why, if aw wor put to it aw could eit a dozen o' these, un aw used fed up wi' two, but naah, well, aw feel as if aw wor just tastin' th' gravy when aw feel as if aw wor just tastin' th' gravy when aw've had one." Old Tommy would hold up his hands as if startled by the outrangous statement, while James would reach his pipe, ad light it so deliberately as much as to say, "That statement wants a burnt offering."

The Gentle art of eating

Once, and once only, old Tommy was 'had,' for a contract was entered into. Any one of us could eat as many as we liked at one sitting, for a shilling. Well, this was a fair offer, and the Saturday night following found a crowd of eight or nine assembled in Tommy's parlour. The great event was preceded by a regular series of gastromonic feats, related with all the assurance of eye witnesses. W.W. told how T.W. had eaten a potato pie made for a family of six. "Yo' all know J.B.," said the narrator, "well, he wor doing it. Old Tom had to walk fro th Newtawn ovver Cliffe to J.B's. Hasse. It wor a sharpish morning, so he sampled his breakfast afore he started wark, and ate it up, then he worked a couple o' haars, and began to want his breakfast, so he had a look at his dinner, and just a nibble , but it wor too mich for him; he polished th' lot, then back to th' work. Then after three haars' hard wark with mattock and spade, old T.felt peckish, but what use wor it? He had had his breakfast, and he had eaten his dinner, and he was hungry. So he wondered if he could manage to beg at th' Hall a bit o' bread and cheese, when he noticed a servant lass coming towards him wi' a picher o'ale for him. Old Tom licked his lips, and thanked her. She had a great Newfoundland dog, wi' her. Tom drank th' ale, and it fairly sharpened his appetite, and he felt he could eit a sheep. Looking round, he noticed th' dog hadn't gooen back with th' servant, but wor sniffin abaart Tom's dinner basket. It wor a young dog, an Tom took th' handkerchief at o'th basket, started larkin wi th dog, it seyed th' handkerchief and off it went, Tom after it, shaatin in all his might," Aw'll all thi if aw catch thi! Aw'll all thi! Th' servant came running aat it see whatever uor ter do; saw old Tom in a terrible temper, and th' dog in old Tom's dinner cloth in is maath, and at once guessed th' cause o' Tom's anger. Th' guy miss abo heard, and also appeared on th' same, and at once th ordered th' muids er give did Tom a good dinner, which they did, for they put before' im th' potato pie maid for their dinner, and said. "Thar now, don't worry, help yourself , and get good dinner. Another pint o'ale was brought and th' pie and th' ale vanshell, and when one o'th lasses went in to see how he wor getting on , she found im fast asleep, snoorin lorke a pig. Nah, if one chap can polish a potato pie made in a bowl for two men and four women, yair many pies lorke these can a chap manage?" Tommy began to wonder, and his face was a mixture of dought and fear, and a determination if they brought old T.W. to contest his challenge, he would revoke, be the consequence what it may. However, the challenge was accepted, and H.B., a great, strong lad, who had a good appetite and was once reported to have said he had eaten more porridge than would flag all Holmfirth, and bacon swords that would rail it round, was brought in to

face the contest. Old Tom, with a degree of courage, placed No.1 pie before him, the shilling having been subscribed in pennies and halfpence. He began his attack, and No. 1 disappeared, almost as if by magic. No.two duly appeared, and quickly followed No 1. Three, four and five followed in quick succession, amidst the hilarious and noisy comments of the spectators, such as, "Good owd lad," "Go it, tha'll cap' em afore tha's done," "Poor owd Tommy, yo'n taen a wrang un this torme." Up to now, H. had not asked for liquid, but during the dispatch of No sox, he demanded a drink, which was refused by Tommy, but supplied by James, saying, "Water will help to fill up." There was a painful slowing down with No six and even the cheers of his supporters began to weaken, and the encouragement of the spectators changed to taunts, "Thee a aiter! Whor, aw could ha done as weel misen." It was evident Nature had asserted it self, and refused to be maltreated, and with the last mouthful, H. rose from the table and left the wonderful pie contest. Old Tommy shuffled about very contented, but resolving never again to be caught in such a foolish thing.

More Yarns

The evening was spent in narrations of wonderful stories and feats, such as, "One feast Wednesday, did not B.W. eat six of Old Tommy's school cakes?" Old Tommy responded, "No he'd burst first." "Well, but didn't owd Towzer (a hound) once get into your house and eit a dozen," asked one "Nowt o'th sooart," said owd Tommy, "he got in and eit one, and started another, but it wor too much for him so he left it and I yerd he slept nearly a week afore he wor reight agean." "Well,well," said another, "how much will yer tak to let T.W. have his fling?" Old Tommy shook his head, but James, in the quietest manner, with a contented smile on his face, said "O, we'll let him have his fill at twopence a pie.

O, Memory!

Dear old Tommy, and dear old James! We are your debtors for your patience and tolerance of us lads, who in the exuberance of life, could scarce help being a nuisance to staid, sober folk. You stood our tricks and when James was not there, I blush to think of our conduct, asking for change when we had already got it, paying bad coin, going out without paying, all to tease the old man. The writer once paid him a bad shilling between your coppers." I at once repudiated and said it must have been someone else." "No," said the old man, "it wor thee." Then driven to try again, I mustered courage to say, "Did you have a bad shilling some few weeks ago, because I paid you one, and that's in place of it." "No, said the dear honest old soul, "no, I've never had a bad shilling for years. So again I got no relief, for to this day I am certain I paid the old man a shilling and received a sixpence and fourpence in change and a pie the like of ehich I have never found since in any and every part of this good old land.

Huddersfield

Born and Bred

As the Twentieth Century slips into history, Judith Robinson recalls a life that spanned most of it - that of her mother.

Edith Turner 1907 - 2000

Edith was born on the 26th. of June 1907, the eldest of four daughters born to Ethel and Joe Hinchliffe. Her early years were spent in Milnsbridge before moving to Moor End Road, Crosland Moor, because the doctor believed that the air there would be better for her health.

She attended Mount Pleasant School walking there each day wearing clogs which she hated. How she wished for she could have shoes but the family couldn't afford such luxury, they were too expensive. It was during the First World War, so if the local shop in Lockwood got a consignment of jam or treacle then her mother would send her to queue for some before school. As a result she would be late and receive a reprimand from the headmistress who frowned on this practice, but it did not stop her mother sending her again when the occasion arose.

As a child, her uncle gave her piano lessons, but, as the family had no piano she had to visit her grandmother's in order to pratise, a discipline she disliked. Having been born with a bent finger, she also found it difficult (in fact impossible) to stretch an octave and often spoke of how her uncle, in his frustration, would try to hammer the offending little finger straight, but, of course to no avail. As a consequence piano lesson eventually ceased although at the time she could play a few simple pieces.Never her scene and so the

dancing continued, at least until she began courting a man with two left feet!

She was in her twenties when she began courting jack Turner but even then she was expected to be home on the dot of 10 o'clock. She found this restriction difficult to adhere to and would stay out as long as she dare, so that occasionally she was embarrassed to hear her father shouting at her from the house doorway. on the other hand Amy, who was courting at the same time, was always home in good time and this annoyed Edith because she said "It makes me appear to be even later than I am". It was a frequent source of argument between them.

In December 1936 Edith and jack were married. By this time the family were living in Woodhead Road, Lockwood, so the bride walked across the road to her wedding at Lockwood Parish Church. The honeymoon was a few days in Bridlington, where it snowed, and then it was home to Primrose Hill, and the house where she was to live for the next 63.5 years.

Her first holidays were spent at Holme village where she stayed with relatives. Her father took her, and her sister Amy who was 18 months younger, to Holmfirth on the train and they would walk the rest of the way. Even though she was only a few miles from Crosland Moor it felt like a different world to her and she loved her holidays there. Holidays continued to be important to her throughout her life and she still managed to get away each year, always in Britain of course, until well into her eighties.

She was 11 years old when sister Janey was born and nearly 13 when the last child, Vera arrived, and so she had to help to bring them up. They remember her bathing them in a tub in the outside wash house and taking them on picnics and blackberry picking on the moor. She also helped look after their neighbours children and would recall how she pushed Gordon Turner out in his pram when he was a baby and she was a teenager.
There was a strong community spirit in the area and bonfire night was always a big occasion, when Edith and her sister Amy, would make a guy. The neighbourhood children always eagerly awaited it being finished, and both Vera and Gordon remember them as being absolutely fantastic and totally realistic. On one occasion whilst it was still in the cellar, its masked face gave Vera the fright of her life when she came across it. On another occasion it had been put outside in the hope of getting "a penny for the guy" and a dustbin man set the squibs, that were its fingers, alight before the big day arrived.

Edith began as an apprentice mender when she was 13 years old and continued mending until her family was born.

She worked in a number of mills in, and around, Huddersfield, but on more than one occasion was on "short time" or made redundant. Working days began early and Edith never found getting out of bed easy so she would stay in bed as long as she dare and more often than not, would have to run to catch the tram. Vera says that when she worked in Elland the conductors would say to her "you go to sleep lass and we'll wake you when we get there."!

At one point she was Molly Haigh's mending partner and Molly remembers the fun and laughter they shared together at that time, especially during their breakfast and lunch breaks. They would play hide and seek among the piles of pieces, or just simply hide among them and throw chalk at unsuspecting colleagues, and they would push one another around in the big baskets used for moving pieces from one department to another. If the weather was warm and sunny they would eat their dinner sitting on the river bank and then enjoy a game of skipping afterwards. Edith often told the story of how one persons plated meal, which had been brought to heat up at dinnertime, inadvertently fell into the mill machinery and emerged ruined at the other end, much to everyones great amusement. So even if working hours were long and physically hard, there was also a great deal of enjoyment and friendship and Molly remembers Edith as a cheerful person who was always smiling.

In her leisure time she enjoyed dancing and would go with her friends to the dances at David Browns. Although her parents let her go, her father warned that, if ever he heard that she'd been in the Railway Pub during the interval, she'd never be allowed to go again. But drinking was never her scene and so the dancing continued, at least until she began courting a man with two left feet!

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Huddersfield Local History Society Programme 2000 - 2001

25 September 2000	A Local Hero Mr Bill Mackie	**29 January 2001**	Co-operative Movement Mr Cyril Pearce
14 October 2000	Study Day at Newsome South Methodist Church *(Details still to be finalised)* *Also incorporating Annual General Meeting.*	**26 February 2001**	Mr Woodhead — Tolson Museum Mr Barker
		26 March 2001	History of Holme Mr K Denton
30 October 2000	Trouble At Mill Mr Chris Schofield	**30 April 2001**	Tudor West Yorkshire Mr D Weldrake
27 November 2000	Barnsley Linen Industry Mr Eric White	**21 May 2001**	Chartist Movement Mr A Brook
6 December 2000	Annual Dinner at Woodsome Hall Speaker *(still to be arranged)*	**25 June 2001**	Excursion to Holme village

All Meetings except those marked will take place in the Light Reading Room,Huddersfield Library, at 7.30 pm
(The 2001-2002 series of talks will commence on Monday 24 September 2001)

Membership subschitions ; Single £5, Joint £9 are due at the start of the session

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Huddersfield Local History Society Publications for sale

PUBLIC LIVES **The Family of Joseph Woodhead a Notable Family of Huddersfield** **By Pamela Cooksey** **£4.00**	**JOSEPH KAYE** **Builder of Huddersfield c.1779 to 1858** **By Edward J. Law** **£1.75**
QUEEN STREET CHAPEL AND MISSION HUDDERSFIELD **By Edward Royle** **£3.00**	**JOHN BENSON PRITCHETT** **First Medical Officer of Health for Huddersfield** **By J. B. Eagles** **£1.50**

"No splendour, but taste everywhere"

This year's June excursion ventured into North Kirklees for a visit to the Red House.

If the past, in L.P. Hartley's memorable phrase, is indeed a foreign country, then the heritage industry offers no end of package tours for the modem time traveller. Think of a popular author, historical figure, or even television series, and there is almost certainly a "country" or "trail, ready mapped and brochured, waiting to be explored. The challenge for the Kirklees owned Red House, has been to graft one such, the Shirley Country, on to the solid stock of real Spen Valley History.

The House itself is a somewhat deceptive, not to say inconspicuous building, standing on the very edge of the main road through Gomersal. Built of the then locally rare red brick, its present appearance belies its 17th century origins. Constructed in the vernacular style, and extended "gable by gable" over the years, it was given a new interior and symmetrical front in the 18th century.

Not in itself particularly remarkable, apart from the colouring - for the Spen Valley is not without good vernacular houses - it is, of course, the Bronte connection that makes the House special. The Taylor family, cloth manufacturers and merchants-, owned the House from 1660 through to 1920, but it was the friendship of Joshua Taylor's daughter Mary with Charlotte Bronte that ensured immortality. Charlotte, Mary and Ellen Nussey were fellow pupils at Miss Woller's Roe Head school, where they nurtured friendship and an interesting line in early feminism. Charlotte believed that" single women should have more to do" than conventional society allowed, while the determinedly independent Mary liked" to establish my right to be doing odd things".

When Shirley came to be written, rooted so deeply in recent Spen Valley history, " Briarmains" and its occupants played a significant, and recognisable , part. As Mary wrote to the author, "you've made us all talk as 1 think we would have done". The House has been a museum since the Borough of Spenborough acquired it in 1969, but it is only recently that it has been restored to the style of a specific period. Now, the visitor enters through the hall, converted from the original housebody in the 18th century, and steps into the parlour that so impressed Charlotte. It is, as far as possible, the house of 1832.

But there is more to Red House than the Bronte connection; displays in the House and outbuildings illustrate everyday life in the Spen Valley. Batley's Mill, Lion Confectionery, Gomersal Colliery - the work places, schools, places of entertainment are all illustrated and recalled by those who knew them. They were a close-knit community in the days when a tram ride to Heckmondwike was a notable outing . An amalgam of small communities, independent, but with a fierce communal loyalty - as one resident recalled "we have a way in Spen Valley, that if there's any crisis arises, we're always ready to help that crisis".

All of which records a way of life as important, if not as romantic, as the story of its great literary visitor, "very shy and nervous (in) old-fashioned clothes, very cold and miserable short-sighted" and speaking with a strong Irish accent, as Mary Taylor described her famous friend in 1856.

Bookshelf

Railway enthusiasts don't enjoy the best of public images - the very word "trainspotter" being enough to inspire instant derision, but railway history has much to offer the local historian.

The railways transformed many towns and employed many of their citizens. A book such as Neil Fraser's Hill house Immortals, includes many facts for the enthusiasts and a wealth of human interest for the general reader. For this is the story of a locomotive shed and its men; like the driver whose well-aimed shovel supplied his greenhouse in Canker Lane with free coal for 40 years. A chapter about "men on the shed" shows what it was like to spend 8 hours cleaning out an engine, while the section on Ben Gamer takes the reader inside his Cowcliffe Hill home. Perhaps most interesting to the non-specialist is the potted biography of John Armitage, whose "utterly dedicated" 60 hour weeks, took him from junior railway clerk to Councillor and Alderman.

As a description of railway scenery," scenes of surpassing loveliness ', is more likely to conjure up visions of the Settle-Carlisle than anything in southern Yorkshire, yet this was applied, a century ago, to the Penistone Line. Paul Salveson's booklet traces the history of this railway "from 1850-2000 and beyond". Once quite industrial, with steelworks at Penistone and mines nearby at Skelmanthorpe and Clayton West, the track has been saved for the 21st century by the needs of tourism, commuters, and the very determined Penistone Line Partnership (who have published this attractive booklet for a modest £1.50)
The profession of railwayman may not be quite what it once was, though it is, at least self-explanatory. What manner of man, though, was a higgler? The answer is one of the many facets of village life illuminated in Shepley: a glimpse across time, published as a Millennium commemorative by the Shepley Village Society. A century of village life is recalled, in what the Master Tailor and Cutler's Gazette of 1896 described as the "richest village in England- a tailor's paradise", a suitable place for Higglers in fact.

Genealogy and cookery are two of the most popular pastimes of the moment, so a book combining both should be an instant success. Unfortunately Margaret McGhee's Colne Valley kitchen: food and family history, is privately published in her present home town of Edinburgh, but copies are available in the Local Studies Library. Weaving a culinary path through the author's family history, the book blends practical folk recipes with the lives of the women who made the. As an exercise in "her story", it provides an unusual angle on a familiar theme.

This was the year that the Methodist Conference came to Huddersfield, and the event was marked with a joint publication of the West Yorkshire Archives and Kirklees Community History Services. Methodist Churches in Kirklees lists potted accounts of over 200 churches that have very much still active, is the subject of Peter Arnold's Methodism in a West Yorkshire Village; Derby Dale. A substantial work, it tells the story of local Methodism from its origins at Joseph Wood's farm in 1796.

The village of Emley is captured is captured in Sheila Hey's Photographic history of Emley, a popular history which reflects "the tranquillity and peace of the early decades of the century. As history itself becomes ever more popular, more organisations are becoming involved with their own publications. Kirklees Community History Service has launched its own newsletter History on your doorstep which provides current information on the local history scene. Few years are complete without a substantial book of photographs, though this year's is still in the pipeline, Huddersfield, home town memories, is due to be published by the Examiner and Breedon Books later in the autumn.

Books are by no means the only publishing medium these days, and there is also a growing local video market. The Colne Valley Society has produced no less than four tapes, narrated by local historians. The lilies of our valley: a heritage walk around Golcar, with Beryl Kozak, Land of the leadboilers: historical highlights of Linthwaite and its people, by Lesley Kipling, Slaithwaite: a saunter round the centre, with May A Freeman and Historic Marsden: a Colne Valley Society Heritage Trail, narrated by Peter Armitage - who has also described the two volume Around Old Marsden, produced by R&R Video Productions.

"It was a cosy day" in the workhouse"

On the eve of the Great War, a Holmfirth Express reporter cast a rose-tinted eye over Deanhouse (from the Express of 8th August 1914)

Last week there appeared in the "Express" a set of sprightly verses, from the pen of an inmate of Deanhouse, descriptive of the day's routine of the institution. The verses themselves were tuned to the lighter vein-to a vein that was tapped so well and so artistically, and at the same time so aptly by such a strummer as Calyerley. The effusion of the inmate of Deanhouse as a purely literary effort while not on the same high level as that which was attained by the master of a style whom I have referred to, possessed a merit of their own, and revealed at once that the writer was capable of better and higher things. Let us hope that we shall hear from him again-even though the fates should be good to him, and decree that when he next tunes his harp he will have found his way out of the institution into which he had, to use a kind of nautical phrase, "put in for repair."

Now, I have sampled many institutions, here and there, of the workhouse kind. Truth to tell, I never see a workhouse without being seized with a strange impulse to see the inside of it. It is not that I have a consuming desire to become a permanent resident-that, as it were, I look upon such an institution as my future home. "East, west, hame's best," is a saying (and more than a saying, for it has the ring of truth and sincerity about it) with which I am familiar. And was it not Payne the author of that soul stirring melody, "Home, sweet home," who never had a home to boast of; never had a common stone enclosure with a slate lid which he could call his own-home.

But this is a digression! To Deanhouse I went, and I saw. Now, Deanhouse I went, and I saw. Now, Deanhouse is not a workhouse. It is a retreat, a refuge-a place in which the homeless and the friendless can have both of these awful blanks made good. There is here no task work; no effort at the initiation of some industrial enterprise which is designed to find labour for "hands" the fruits of which are to be projected upon a "market" as a commodity offering "competition" with a private trader.

Set in its own beautiful grounds, where the flowers of the season are dispensing their sweetness, stands Deanhouse. I approach, and am at once taken in hand by one of the officials-Mr Robinson, accommodating, kindly, a man with a taste for detail and orderliness, which shews at once that he is expected of him.

It is not my purpose to bore the reader with details, nor to give even the faintest clue to the names of many of these inmates that I met. Many there are, or were, who are known to some who perúse this brief sketch. I went not to get a '"report," but to gather an impression.
Here, at Deanhouse, everything is in order to a button. The cleanliness of the whole interior is so marked. "You may eat your dinner off these floors without the necessary table-cloth," whispers my companion (who is neither an inmate nor an official), and I answer in a quiet aside, "That is so."

We enter the kitchen, and see the cooking utensils, and the huge up to date appliances which are there to cook the victuals for these poor people. Of course, this is only a first thought-that which has suggested the word "poor" By and by we find that the word "poor" is altogether out of place. We enter the sacred precincts of the bakehouse, where we see a functionary, arrayed in all the trappings of a real chef, who is working in doughy element (and plenty of it), which betokens a certainty that the inmates will never be short of bread. Then we have a look at the day room, a large apartment where those on the men's side, who are able to be out and about, can foregather round the fire (or the fire place, for the time for fire (or the fire place, for the time for fires is not yet) and discuss the Ulster or the Balkans question, or better still, and more to their liking, "the light of other days."

Then next, upstairs to the sleeping to the sleeping places-those long stretching rows of beds, fit places of repose, the like of which could not be had in many a high class hotel.

Next, to the hospital, where I met some strange, sad sights. Bed after bed, occupied by those mysterious physical ailments which put the units out of the running, let us hope only for a space. I linger over one bed, and am informed, by the patient that he and George Hirst-the George Hirst-"came out" on the cricket field at the same time. The great George and this man were pals. How the vagaries of this factor in life which we call fate does it work! How have the pals become separated! Yonder, by his bedside, sits another patient of quite superior mien, and grave and gentlemanly aspect. He is the author of the verses to which I have referred at the opening of this article. We ask no questions. We allow the curtain to keep down: it has already fallen.

And so on, to those more strange and more sad derelicts-those whom the gods have treated worse of all-those who have lost, or been denied, that most precious gift a properly balanced mind. We are face to face with those who little or no knowledge of the world in which they live. Sad, sad, and yet again sad. There, over there is a man who was once a bright and skilled musician. A man who could make a violin speak; one in former years was wont to play in the orchestra of a great theatre ere yet the curtain had risen to give joy to the great throng on this side the footlights.

And so to the women's side of the institution. For women do count for much in these days. And here are representatives of the sex who are not much troubled about the vote, or indeed of any such questionable "privilege" which is given to mere man. The women are happy; they don't say so in so many words. They tell you in another way. Their looks do the telling. Let it be said we are now among the able bodied women-those again who are able to go about, or sit in their day room discussing everything and everyone; and it may be imagined that they don't forget to sum up the "situation" or their sex, and apportion blame and praise where either has its due, and without and regard to a sense of proportion. For even here women are after all-women. And they can give a license to their tongue, and indulge in such a freedom of opinion as would furnish the choicest titbits of real "society" gossip. In another little apartment we come upon a woman who is deep in the infrincacies of mending worn garments. And, listen; her companion is absorbed in a novel-yes, a real yellow back novel, where the fortunes of a Lydia Languish perchance are being followed with an interest which must make the reader believe that she is herself an actual participant in the whole drama. Thus does fiction make sisters-and brothers-of us all! Here, in a small compartment in Deanhouse, is an inmate following the trail of the old, old story of Love. I wonder whether the slumbers of the reader would be disturbed for the night over Miss Lydia's triumph when she is so "live happy ever after!" Then we enter the dormitory where senility is seen at its-best, shall we say? Here is the alignment of clean, white beds. The occupants are all old, so very old as to be ripe for Heaven. But the pathway down the last slope is made so smooth and so easy! Grannies, all of them. Who could not help feeling a kindship with them all in turn! Venerable old ladies! Dear old souls! A few are asleep; a few are awake; others nod, half-awake in their cots; others again are very much awake, and can talk with the prodigal garrulousness of those who are determined to have the best that life and Deanhouse have yet to offer. These talkative old ladies are not in bed. Not them! They are seated by the bedsides of others who are far gone in somnolent But they must talk. And they do talk. They welcome the arrival of strangers, and they persist in a former acqaintanceship, in the light of other days which has long since gone. To be sure, one knew my father and my mother, and all my uncles and aunts (more uncles and aunts indeed than ever I could reckon on); but the old lady was happy in the recollection of all these putative relatives, and even though her companion could show signs of sleepiness in her cot, she (who was much awake)-Mrs O., it was-would still keep to it that she knew all about us-even to that interesting period "before we were born."

It was a great sight, was these old folks-old folks, I gather, who had no relatives, no home. And being thus void, how or where could they be called upon to end their days in better surroundings, and in better hands? Here they are tended with a care which sweetens and softens the last years of long lives. And so we leave this company of old dames reposing in comfort, and having their every want ministered to leave them with a feeling that we should like to renew our visit, and see them all again.

I have omitted may details about Deanhouse, I set out with the remark that this article would be in form of an impression, and not a mere "report". One could say much about the work of the nursing staff-these brightly clad ministering angels who do their work so quietly, yet so efficiently; about the whole establishment, in which sweetness and light are so evident; and about the spacious grounds in which the able bodied can sit or walk, and indulge the contemplative mood in such a choice environment. But enough has been said.

Deanhouse, to repeat, has nothing suggestive of the "workhouse" about it; it is no "modern Bastille," the taint of poverty or charity is entirely absent. Deanhouse is a retreat for those old and the homeless, a place of refuge for those who without friends, where they can "trim with frugal care the lamp of life." And whatever revolutionary changes may be wrought in our poor law system, in whatever wholesale fashion the dissolution of the workhouse may be encompassed, it may be taken for granted that institutions such as that of Deanhouse will be spared for they fulfil a purpose as noble as it is necessary.

"Tragedy at the Isle of Skye"

Bank holidays have become synonymous with traffic problems. Monster traffic jams ensnare many holiday "honeypots" and spoil many a day out. In the 1930s, popular motoring was in its infancy, but accidents, sadly, were not. As this tragic tale of Easter Monday 1934 (taken from newspaper reports supplied by Keith Hollingworth) relates.

Even in that pre-motorway age, there seems to be something particularly ironic in a major accident taking place in such a remote spot with so little traffic.

There were five fatalities and three injuries, with three of the dead and all of the injured coming from the devastated village of New Mill. They were, as The Times noted in its brief report, out for a holiday "joy-ride". All eight, including the driver, were packed into a local taxi owned by the firm of Herbert Booth & Sons. It was a "powerful 40 hp. Sunbeam", a particularly large and solid vehicle for its day, but it was to come off the worst when confronted by a light Standard saloon driven by a Liverpool man (with three lady companions) on the bleak road between the Isle of Skye and Moorcock Inns. Two landmarks whose primary purpose played a significant part in the subsequent investigations.

The taxi driver, Jim Clark, just 22 years old, was described as an experienced and capable man who had driven over the moors many times, and was the only employee entrusted with that special taxi.

On the morning of that fateful day, in one of several poignant touches noted by the press, the taxi had conveyed a wedding party, and its floors were still strewn with confetti. Its afternoon hire was intended to be nothing more than a moorland jaunt, concluding with a dance at Shepley.
As the inquest, held at the Holme Valley Memorial Hospital, discovered, however, there were several stops on the journey. The White Hart and Shoulder of Mutton Inns at New Mill, the Isle of Skye. Bill o'Jacks, Moorcock and the Clarence at Greenfield all featured in the itinerary. All members of the party, including the driver, availed themselves of the facilities - in sharp contrast to the Liverpool party who had only stopped to refresh themselves with tea at a roadside cottage on their journey home from Harrogate.

The impact of the collision threw both vehicles off the road, with the heavily-built taxi plunging down a slope, turning over several times, and partially disintegrating in the process. The three survivors, Frank Ainley, Jack England and Arnold Mosley were all thrown clear, but none were able to recall anything of the collision.

The Liverpool party were only slightly injured and 'after escaping through the sun roof of their car, were able to continue their journey by train.

For Jim Clark, Arthur Barraclough, Harry Golden, Albert Haigh and Harry Hilton, there was no such happy ending. All in their early twenties, their deaths had a profound effect on the little village.

Possibly the most poignant, to the Press at least, was the death of Arthur Barraclough, whose father was sexton of New Mill Parish Church. Standing on a rocky hillside, the graveyard presented a particular problem in that its graves had to be hewn out of solid rock, and therefore required preparing well in advance. The grave that Frank Barraclough had prepared was thus unwittingly ready -made for his own son, whose internment took place next to that of Harry Hilton, also of New Mill. For Mrs Schofield of Sudehill, there was a happier, if briefly shocking conclusion to the tragedy. Informed that her husband, Gilbert, was one of the fatalities, she promptly fainted, only to be re-assured later that the victim was actually Harry Hilton of Springwood.
It was a tragedy that touched the whole community, though the vagaries of human nature occasionally shine through. As when one of the Coroner's jurymen asked to be excused further deliberations, as his school was returning from half-term and he wished to resume his "professional duties" in the caretaking department.
Then there was the remarkably tetchy outburst from the pre-media age Coroner, who castigated "all and sundry - undertakers, the Pressmen and solicitors" for contacting his home number," I haven't a great deal of leisure, and I don't want to be disturbed by these inquiries". One can only speculate as to what he would have made of the modem wall-to-wall television coverage!
In the end, the verdict, like the reporting was matter of fact and non-judgemental (in sharp contrast to today's journalism). Precisely what had happened on that misty moor remained something of a mystery, and the worst road accident in living memory was Accidental Death.

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